

Joint Statement from Bishop Michael F. Burbidge (Diocese of Arlington) and  
Bishop Barry C. Knestout (Diocese of Richmond) in  
Response to the Attorney General's Investigation

Today, Attorney General Mark Herring publicly announced his office's investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by clergy in Virginia. The Diocese of Arlington and the Diocese of Richmond assure the faithful and the public that we are cooperating with the Attorney General's office. Any instance of child sexual abuse is intolerable and gravely immoral. We hope that this process will bring healing for all victims and confirm our commitment to accountability and justice.

Having met with victims, we know that such abuse is unforgettable, and many carry that burden with them throughout their lives. We continue to welcome the opportunity to meet personally with victims, to hear their stories, and to support them in their journey toward healing.

Prior to being contacted by the Attorney General, [both dioceses began internal investigative processes using independent investigators tasked with reviewing all diocesan clergy files](#). We promised to publish a list of all priests and deacons against whom credible and substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been made, and we renew that promise. We will continue these efforts and ensure it does not impede the Attorney General's investigation.

In keeping with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, established in 2002, we report every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor to legal authorities. Each accusation is also brought before a diocesan Review Board, composed mostly of lay people. We thoroughly vet clergy and staff and train them to identify suspicious behavior and report any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. Volunteers who interact with children also go through this process.

We encourage anyone aware of misconduct or abuse on the part of clergy or staff of either diocese to notify legal authorities and utilize the hotline established by the Attorney General: <http://www.virginiaclergyhotline.com/> In addition, victims of sexual abuse in the Diocese of Arlington or the Diocese of Richmond are invited to contact the respective diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator who is available to help victims/survivors make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese, arrange a personal meeting with the bishop or his representative, and to obtain support for the needs of the individual and families.

The diocesan child protection policies are online at:  
[arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection](http://arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection)  
[https://richmonddiocese.org/child\\_protection\\_virtus/](https://richmonddiocese.org/child_protection_virtus/)